

# **AN OPEN LETTER**

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To

## **Conservatives Everywhere!**

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### **THE REASON WHY I**

*BY ONE OF THE SUPPORTERS OF THE GOVERNMENT.*

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### **Why we voted for the Government--and the Remedial Bill.**

1.—Because we are Liberal-Conservatives. Our Government is a Liberal-Conservative Government, and it embodies the Liberal-Conservative policy which since 1878 has done so much to develop and unite the various Provinces of Canada. This policy vitally affects the Trade, Tariff, Agricultural, Mining, Fishing, and Industrial interests of the country.

If on this one point—even suppose we did not agree altogether with the principles of Remedial Legislation—we had defeated the Government, the whole policy which we believe to be beneficial and necessary to the progress of the country would have been put in peril, and very likely swept entirely away.

As good Conservatives we could not take that tremendous responsibility in reference to the business interests of Canada.

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2.—Because we fear the Grits as Rulers of Canada.

Had we defeated the Government these would have succeeded to power. Then what? We remembered what happened in 1874-9—how trade diminished, how revenues went down, and how taxes went up; how debt rolled up to the figure of \$8,000,000 annually, and deficits were the order of each year; how a hundred thousand farmers petitioned for protection, and the artisans walked the streets for work, and general depression settled on all branches of business.

We remember that since then the Grits have changed Leaders three times, out of mere caprice or despair of success; that they have changed policies as often as they have been defeated at the polls; that now they have for a trade policy a hybrid monstrosity made up of a Free Trade as in England, plus unrestricted Reciprocity with the United States, plus Tariff for Revenue only, plus anything else that will catch a vote.

As good Conservatives we could not vote to turn out the Liberal-Conservatives and enthronize the Grits, with the prospect of all the consequent ruin to the best interests of Canada.

3.—Because the Grit associations were too fragrant!

We cannot forget that Mr. Laurier upheld the Rebel Riel, whose success would have destroyed our Northwest; that after Riel's rising he declared that, had he been on the Saskatchewan he would have levelled his musket against the Canadian volunteers who braved danger and death to preserve Canada to the British Crown; that he was the bosom friend of Mercier, who looted the Quebec Treasury to assist Grit fortune-hunters and political hangers-on; that his trusted friends to-day are the Langeliers, the Picauds, the Tartes, and the Hon. "Jimmy" McShane; and that, as La Patrie says, these fragrant gentlemen, with "ladles ready," are waiting for the "Soup they Smell in Ottawa," to be prepared by Laurier when he gets into power.

As good Conservatives we objected to vote such men as these into office.

4.—Because we believed that we should stand by the Government on Constitutional grounds. . . . .

There is no doubt that for purposes of peace and harmony the Confederation guaranteed Separate Schools to religious minorities—Protestant and Catholic—in the Provinces in which they existed at that time, and provided for appeal to the Government of Canada in regard to any Post Union legislation that might be granted to them.

There is no doubt that in the Manitoba Act clauses were placed which were intended to be, and were supposed to be, sufficient to preserve to the minority whatever school privileges they had by law or practice at time of Union, and provided for the preservation of any privileges granted them after the Union.

There is no doubt that these Post Union privileges were taken away by the Act of 1890, that the Judicial Commission of the Privy Council of the Empire decided that the minority had a grievance, and that the Dominion Parliament had the jurisdiction to remedy that grievance.

Ample time and sundry invitations were given to the Government of Manitoba, and that Government has refused any action looking towards the remedy of the grievance of the minority.

As good Conservatives we considered that in the interests of fair play, and in obedience to the plain dictates of the Constitution, we were bound to sustain the Government's action.

5.—Because we know that it was no fault of the Liberal-Conservative Government that the question came up for settlement.

The Constitution was framed in 1867 and in 1870, and ratified by the British Parliament. That has not since been changed, and the Government is sworn to abide by it. From 1867 until to-day no other Province has tried in any way to abridge the rights or privileges of Religious Minorities provided for in the Constitution.

The Grit party in Manitoba were the first to do such a thing. They swept away, in 1890, the School privileges of the minority of Manitoba;—did this with utter disregard to rights previously enjoyed, and have since refused any relief.

The Grit party in the Dominion have for six years used this question as a political club with which, if possible, to destroy the Government.

The Government has followed a strictly legal course, step by step ascertaining from the highest tribunals the rights and powers possessed. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council of Great Britain finally decided that the Constitution had sought to guarantee, and was supposed to have guaranteed, the rights of the minority; that these had been taken from them by the Greenway Government, and that Parliament had jurisdiction to restore them as contemplated by the Constitution.

The Liberal-Conservative Government accepted the decision, refused to dodge the question, did everything in its power to induce the Manitoba Government to remedy the grievance, and, when all proved unavailing, took the manly course of doing justice.

As good Conservatives, we disliked the arbitrary and severe course adopted in 1890, despised the shuffling, shifting, cowardly partisan conduct of the Grit party, and voted for the open, honest, straightforward course of the Government.

6.—Because no interest of Manitoba would suffer if the Government Bill passed. What does it propose?

(1) Simply to allow Roman Catholics to use their own school taxes to pay for their own schools.

(2) It does not appropriate one cent of the money of any Protestant taxpayer toward the support of Catholic schools, nor one cent of Government funds collected from the ratepayers generally.

(3) It makes the standard of teachers and school books equal to those in the other Provinces of Canada, and thus ensures efficient education for the Catholic youth

(4) It gives the sole control of the schools to trustees elected by the ratepayers, and to a Board of Education selected by the Government of Manitoba.

(5) It allows any Catholic who prefers the Public schools to pay his taxes and send his children to these schools.

In the light of former rights enjoyed for twenty years, and in the plain purpose of the Constitution, what else could be done, and what public interests does it harm? . . . .

As good Conservatives and fellow citizens of Catholics, who form 45 per cent. of the total population of Canada, we voted for the Government proposal and with a view to preserve that peace and harmony which is so essential to this country. . . .

Think over carefully what we have done; put yourselves in our places, and ask yourselves candidly and honestly, would you not, as fair men and good citizens, have done the same?

A CONSERVATIVE MEMBER WHO VOTED FOR THE REMEDIAL BILL.